

Health Profiles Communication Guidance

Gateway number: 6513

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1. What are Health Profiles?

The government’s Choosing Health White Paper published in November 2004 by the Department of Health, set out commonsense steps to prevent unnecessary deaths and help people to live healthier lives. It focused on six key priority areas: tackling health inequalities, reducing the numbers of people who smoke, tackling obesity, improving sexual health, improving mental health and well-being and reducing harm and encouraging sensible drinking.

The White Paper recognised that if local communities are to take action to improve health they need clear, understandable and timely information about local needs and trends. Health Profiles are designed to provide accessible information that can be linked to other local data sets and support Directors of Public Health and Local Authorities in promoting health in their area. It is proposed that they will form the basis of the **Community** Health Profiles, which are planned to be released around September, as part of the Social Marketing “*small change: Big Difference*” initiative. They will aim to highlight progress on health locally and provide targeted information so that people can understand the issues and engage in action to improve health in their local communities.

Health Profiles form a comprehensive suite of information located in one place, consistent over time and across local boundaries, which allows the telling of a complete integrated story on health.

2. What are the Key Messages?

- Health Profiles aim to provide health information about local communities for local communities.
- The information contained in the Health Profiles aims to help key stakeholders, such as Local Authorities, the NHS and their respective partners, take action to improve health in their areas.
- They are a set of indicators commissioned by the Department of Health and produced by Public Health Observatories. They give a comprehensive picture of health in each Local Authority area.
- The data can and should be supplemented by locally collected health information.
- The Health Profiles will be published annually. They will continue to include the current indicators shown in this first set of prototype profiles, but will also include further indicators and more detailed analysis as appropriate in the future.
- The aim of the Health Profiles is to help identify areas that should be priorities for local action. A consistent, focused approach on these areas should help to improve health in the area and achieve local PSA targets.

When describing or referring to the Health Profiles in any literature or other communications that you produce locally, please use the agreed *Key Messages* above to ensure consistency and clarity of key messages about the profiles across the country.

3. What is “*small change:Big Difference*”?

The “*small change:Big Difference*” initiative encourages people to make small changes in their lifestyles to give them a better chance of living longer, healthier lives.

The objective of the initiative is to encourage people to take a step towards achieving the recommended healthy eating and physical activity targets, by highlighting the fact that a small but sustained change in lifestyle – taking moderate exercise and eating one extra portion of fruit or serving of vegetables every day – can make a significant difference to life expectancy. Lifestyle change does not have to be an all or nothing exercise. Every step towards achieving the recommended targets counts.

The initiative was launched on the 25 April 2006 by the Prime Minister Tony Blair with Secretary of State Patricia Hewitt.

For more information visit www.dh.gov.uk/smallchange

4. How do Health Profiles link to sc:BD?







As a key next step in the “*small change:Big Difference*” initiative, it is proposed that the Department of Health produces a series of popular and accessible **Community** Health Profiles in the Autumn, which will provide local health knowledge, advice and resources. These will enable local communities to see their own particular health problems and, with government support, marshal local people, businesses and employers to help them make a difference to people’s lifestyles. We will organise local seminars to initiate local action and will seek active cross-government involvement and support in suggesting participants and ideas for action.

Progress and updates on this piece of work will be published and maintained on the Community Health Profiles website, where the finished profiles will also be published. Once complete, there will be a separate, pro-active communication strategy and media launch for disseminating the **Community** Health Profiles, which will be coordinated and managed No. 10 and the Department of Health.

5. Where does the national profile fit in?

The national “Health Profile of England” will be released around September 2006, at the same time as the Public Health Information and Intelligence Strategy: *Informing Healthier Choices*”.

The “Health Profile of England” provides a collection of national and regional data to be used as a yardstick against which local areas can compare their own Health Profile data. The indicators used in this profile focus particularly – but not exclusively - on the six priority areas identified in the “Choosing Health” White Paper:

-  **Tackling Health Inequalities**
-  **Reducing number of people who smoke**
-  **Reducing obesity and improving diet and nutrition**
-  **Improving sexual health**
-  **Improving mental health and wellbeing**
-  **Reducing harm and encouraging sensible drinking**

The “Health Profile of England” is intended to be of use to public service professionals and officials within the local community - such as local councillors and PCT DsPH - who may be in a position to exert influence over the planning, procurement and delivery of public health programmes. The document will also be of interest to a much wider audience – anyone with an interest in the profile of health and health determinants in this country.

6. How will the Health Profiles be communicated?

The Health Profiles will formally be available to professionals and the public alike on Monday 12th June 2006, when they will also be published on the Health Profiles website (www.communityhealthprofiles.info).

Until the 12th June 2006, the information contained within the Health Profiles and the Health Profiles themselves are strictly embargoed.

This means they should not be published in any reports or websites, nor given as handouts, communicated to the media or distributed in any way beyond the pre-agreed audiences. Please ensure that anyone who receives the Profiles before Monday 12th June 2006, is aware of this.

These prototype Health Profiles will be distributed to all PCT DsPH, Local Authority Members, SHA RDsPH, GORs, MPs, MEPs and all relevant communication leads, prior to Monday 12th June

The Audit Commission will also be referencing and linking to the Health Profiles and the Community Health Profiles website in the re-launch of their own Area Profiles website (www.audit-commission.gov.uk/areaprofiles).

On and after the 12th June 2006, PCTs and LAs are free to use the information contained within the Health Profiles for publicity on local issues and stories. Whilst there is to be no formal dissemination of the Health Profiles, any requests for copies are to be honoured by directing them to www.communityhealthprofiles.info.

7. Who are the contacts for the Health Profiles?

PCTs and LAs are expected to deal with local enquiries on the Health Profiles and associated messages contained therein. For other enquiries, see below:

- Your regional PHO for all queries relating to data, methodology and content of the Health Profiles.
 - North West (contactus@nwpho.org.uk)
 - North East (info@nepho.org.uk)
 - Yorkshire and Humber (yhpho-info@york.ac.uk)
 - East Midlands (administrator@empho.nhs.uk)
 - West Midlands (contact@wmpo.org.uk)
 - East of England (enquiries@rdd-phru.cam.ac.uk)
 - London (enquiries@lho.org.uk)
 - South of England (enquiries@sepho.org.uk)
 - South West (info@swpho.org.uk)

- Department of Health Information and Intelligence Strategy Lead for all queries relating to the relationship of the Public Health Information and Intelligence Strategy to the Health Profiles (robert.jack@dh.gsi.gov.uk).

- Department of Health regional desk press officer for all regional level enquiries on the profiles (juliette.gaubert@dh.gsi.gov.uk).
- Department of Health public health team for all national level enquiries on the Health Profiles, associated health policy and “*small change:Big Difference*” (brenda.irons-roberts@dh.gsi.gov.uk).